Telephone dues against MPs and ex-MP's

2336. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that MTNL has assessed that about eight crores of rupees on account of telephones of MPs, ex-MPs and ex-Ministers of the Union are outstanding;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken against the erring VIPs?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Rs. 12.77 crores was outstanding on account of telephone dues against MPs and ex-MPs as on 31.12.1996.

(b) The details of outstanding on account of telephone dues are as under:—

1. MPs	Rs. 4.52 Crores
2. Ex-MPs	Rs. 8.25 Crores
	Rs. 12.77 Crores

(c) Issue of bills and recovery thereof is a continous process and there are well laid down procedures for recovery of outstanding Telephone Bills. The recovery of outstanding dues is being pursued with concerned Ex-MPs. Outstanding dues against Ministries/Departments are being pursued with concerned Ministries/Departments.

Setting up of Post Offices in Hilly areas

2337. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the targets fixed and the achievements made for setting up of Post Offices in urban, rural, tribal and hilly areas of the States and Union Territories during the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Five Year Plans;

(b) the steps being contemplated by Government to take up the remaining work in this regard; and

(c) by when the same is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) During the 7th Plan as against the target of 6000 post offices, 4305 post offices were sanctioned and 4003 were opened. Circle wise details are given in Annex. [See Appendix 181, Annexure No. 64]. The information on post offices opened in Tribal Areas during the Plan is at Annex. [See Appendix 181, Annexure No. 64]. Out of the 4003 post offices opened, 3875 were in rural and 128 in the urban areas. Information regarding the post offices set up in the hilly areas is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

The information on targets for opening Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices, and Departmental Sub Post Offices, Postal Circle-wise and the post offices sanctioned in urban, rural and tribal areas during the 8th Five Year Plan is given in Annex. [See Appendix 181, Annexure No. 64].

During the plan for 1997-98 which is also the first year of the 9th Plan there is a target of opening 500 Extra Departmental Branch Post Offices and 50 Departmental Sub Post Offices.

The information of circle-wise allocation of target for opening of post offices during the Annual Plan, 97-98 for the Tribal and other areas is given an Annex. [See Appendix 181, Annexure No. 64].

(b) and (c) Post Offices are opened subject to norm based justification and availability of targets and resources. During the Annual Plan, 1997-98, a target for opening 50 Departmental Sub Post Offices & 500 Extra

Departmental Branch Post Offices has been fixed for the whole country.

There are relaxed norms for opening of post offices in hilly desert and inaccessible areas. Copy of the norm is at Annexure. [*See* Appendix 181, Annexure No. 641.

Mechanisation and Modernisation of Postal Services

2338. DR. B. B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had initiated a plan for mechanisation and modernisation of postal services in the country during the Eighth Five Year Plan.

(b) if so, the extent to which achievements have been made in this regard as on 31st March, 1997; and

(c) the schemes proposed to be taken up during the Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) to (c) Modernisation of the postal system by induction of technology was one of the objectives of the 8th Five Year Plan of the Department of Posts. This objective has been achieved to a great extent through introduction of computer based technology in different areas of activities with specific emphasis on counter services.

The programmes of modernising the postal services implemented during the 8th Five Year Plan were intended to provide:—

(a) More efficient and responsive counter services for the customer;

(b) New, value added services to meet the needs of indentified customer groups; and

(c) Modern and clean work environment with better ergonomics to raise employees morale and eliminate drudgery in work.

The specific programmes of mechanisation and modrenisation operationalized for this purpose during the 8th Five Year Plan are:—

— Introduction of computer based multi-purpose counter machines.

— Automatisation of mail processing in important large centres.

—Setting up of very small Aoerture Terminals (VSATs) network for speedy transmission of money orders and provision of other value added services.

— Use of computers for Savings Bank, Postal Life Insurance (PLI) and Speed Post operations.

—Modernisation of the counter services and the front office through upgradation of work environment and improved customer facilities.

— Providing upgraded operational equipments in more important offices to speed up work processes and eliminate drudgery of work.

The extent of achievements in these schemes for mechanisation and modernisatiorn during the 8th Plan period upto 31-3-97 are indicated in the statement.

The Ninth Five Year Plan of the Department of Posts which is yet to be approved by the Planning Commission seeks to expand the scope and coverage of the programmes of mechanisation and modernisation initiated during the Eighth Plan period along with provision of basic postal facilities in areas were these are not available. Development and marketing of new services specially for the